



# MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH &  
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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## **SUICIDE AND THE BLACK CHURCH CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN MEMPHIS** *CONFERENCE TO BE HELD JUNE 20-22 WITH SLOTS STILL AVAILABLE*

Nashville—The third national Suicide and the Black Church Conference will be held on the grounds of the Healing Center, 3885 Tchulahoma Rd in Memphis on June 20-22, 2007. Sponsored by the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (TDMHDD), The Healing Work Counseling Center, Tennessee Department of Health's Division of Minority Health, Magellan Health Services, Methodist Health Care, Wal Mart, and several area churches, the event's theme *The Storm Continues* represents the need for many groups, including faith-based organizations, to unite and spread awareness throughout all facets of the community on the issue of suicide and suicide prevention.

A variety of experts from across the nation will speak at the conference including Michael A. Torres, M.D., Center for the Integration of Spiritual and Mental Health; Sherry Molock, PhD, George Washington University, and TDMHDD's Commissioner Virginia Trotter Betts.

"In 90 percent of instances, suicide is the result of unrecognized, untreated, or poorly treated mental illness and can be said to be the terminal outcome of serious mental illness," stated Tennessee Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Commissioner Virginia Trotter Betts. "Suicide is the leading cause of violent deaths worldwide, above homicide and death due to natural disasters. Suicide does not discriminate by gender, economic status, race, or ethnicity."

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth and young adults ages 15-24 in Tennessee and throughout the entire nation. The rate of suicide in Tennessee is 13.4 per 100,000 individuals, higher than the national average of 10.8 per 100,000 individuals. Overall, one out of every twelve Tennesseans has been affected by a suicide in the last five years.

Suicide and mental illness tend to be particularly stigmatized among minority populations. This conference provides a great understanding of suicide and its prevention among church leaders allowing them to facilitate informed outreach and effective care for community members.

For registration information on the Suicide and the Black Church conference please visit [www.state.tn.us/mental](http://www.state.tn.us/mental) or call (901)370-4673.

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